Interview with Arthur A. Bardos

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ARTHUR A. BARDOS

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Biosketch

Q: Arthur Bardos was born in 1921, in Budapest, and came to the United States in 1939. He received his primary and secondary education in Berlin and Budapest, and then his university education in the United States, which included the University of Southern California and Harvard University.

He entered the Foreign Service in 1951, and retired in 1986, after a very, very broad and eclectic career, in which he did practically everything that has to be done in the realm of public diplomacy, and also in various areas of the world, in Europe, in Africa, in the Far East, and in the Middle East.

This morning, we thought that we might concentrate on two specifics in his career: one in which he really started, namely, in radio in Europe in 1945, and then the second part of the interview might concentrate on his last post, which was as public affairs counselor in Ankara, in Turkey, especially the latter part, because as far as I know, we have relatively little in our oral history project on that specific country and in that specific area.

Before we start, I want to make brief reference to a monograph which Arthur recently published. It is called “Afterthoughts on Cultural Diplomacy, and it was published by the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy as one of its Murrow Reports. I think this is something that we're going to make reference to later in the interview, because there are some really very interesting and provoking thoughts in your manuscripts. Let's start with radio in 1945. I think you were one of the first, at least as far as I know, one of the first to really be involved in radio as a public diplomacy instrument. You got into it, actually, through the Army. Why don't you just start out and tell me about your initial experience in radio work. I think you started in Radio Luxembourg, isn't that right?

1944: Bardos Begins US Government Information Work at Radio Luxembourg:PsyWar, US Army

BARDOS: That's right. There were altogether five mobile radio broadcasting companies in the US Army, and that was what psychological warfare consisted of. Indeed, the Fourth Company got into radio quite accidentally. We were in London, and it was decided by the authorities in the fall of 1944 that, since the war would shortly end, we would be put aside and used for occupation duty after the end of the war. But since space was short in England, they decided to send us to Luxembourg to sit it out until the end of the war.

We were billeted there and it was foreseen that we would, I suppose, do close-order drill and other useful military things while waiting for the war to end, but just about that time, Supreme Headquarters was setting up Radio Luxembourg as its radio station to pursue the war in psychological warfare vis a vis the enemy. As so often, two parts of the military were not quite certain of the outcome, and each had its own theory.

Q: When specifically was that?

BARDOS: This was in roughly October 1944, so still a long ways to the end of the war.

Q: This was actually still before the Battle of the Bulge.

BARDOS: Oh, yes. Our billeting officer, who had gone ahead to locate the horrible uniform factory in which to billet us, went to the officers' mess, and there got into a conversation with an English gentleman, Patrick Gordon Walker, the later Lord Walker, a very prominent intellectual member of the Labor Party. Mr. Gordon Walker asked him, “What kind of a company are you with, that you are billeting here?”

And he said, “Oh, it's called Fourth Mobile Radio Broadcasting Company,” whereupon Patrick Gordon Walker's eyes lighted up, and he said, “What kind of people do you have in that company?”

He said, “Oh, broadcasters, young people trained in broadcasting in German and French and some in other languages.”

Gordon Walker said, “But I have been fighting with Versailles (which was at that time Supreme Headquarters) for a staff for Radio Luxembourg, because I have orders to start broadcasting here, but I have no personnel.”

So as soon as we arrived in Luxembourg, some of us were put to work in the radio stations. My initial assignment was monitoring, because we had no news sources. We had one Morse monitor who monitored one of the wire services, and otherwise we had some radio which somebody could listen to. Some of use were put to work listening tot the BBC transmissions, to the transmission of the American Broadcasting Station in Europe (London). I don't remember that we could receive the Voice of America at all, most of the time. We made monitoring reports which we quickly got up to the newsroom, and on which our next newscast was then based.

Bardos' Broadcasting Rapidly Ascends in Nature and Importance

Patrick Gordon Walker seemed to like the way I wrote my monitoring reports, because he decided as soon as we got some more Morse monitors so that we were not quite as dependent on voice reports, that I should go up and work for him in the feature service, finding material for mostly BBC people who were then working these things up into broadcast materials.

Then one important day, after a few weeks, he said, “Well, you might as well write it up yourself.” And that's how I was introduced into broadcasting. After a while it was discovered that I had a slight American accent when speaking German, and since the rule of the station was that news were broadcast by people without any foreign accent, but commentaries were broadcast by people with foreign accents, and since they were always short of such people whose German was good but accented, I became a voice for various Britishers and Americans who did not voice their own broadcasts.

Then pretty soon I was told, “Now you can write your own commentaries.” Under the name of Peter Summers, for some reason, I was broadcasting especially to German youth. I produced an enormous amount of material, sometime two or three commentaries on the same day, because we were always short of staff.

Q: How long did this go on?

BARDOS: This went on until, I believe, November 1945. It was about a year altogether, by that time, most of the Britishers had left us to run for Parliament, as in the case of Gordon Walker, and to do other things. So essentially, most of the feature material was written by Golo Mann, now a distinguished German historian, and me, and maybe two or three others, different ones at different times.

Q: But you were still broadcasting for the benefit of the German public?

BARDOS: Yes, yes. In fact, at that point, by that time Radio Luxembourg was the key station for all the stations in the American zone.

Q: None of the German radio stations, had at that time, been re-established?

BARDOS They were slowly being re-established, but at first they took their news and commentaries from Radio Luxembourg. Then they very quickly abandoned that.

Q: So what happened after November 1945?

November 1945: On to Radio Frankfurt (Which was Actually at Bad Nauheim)

BARDOS: We returned the station to its rightful private owners and were transferred to Bad Nauheim, about 16 miles outside of Frankfurt.

Q: This is still the radio company?

BARDOS: This is still the same company or what was left of it. We were led to this boarding house, which was Radio Frankfurt. There were two boarding houses which were studios and offices of Radio Frankfurt, respectively.

Q: In Bad Nauheim?

BARDOS: In Bad Nauheim. One of the people traveling with us, actually, was a German-born civilian borrowed from the BBC and one of the finest announcers I ever heard, Wolf Fries by name. He was a very direct and abrasive fellow, and he walked into the office of the then-head of this radio organization there, whose name was Barry Mahool, and without introducing himself, said “Why did they bring us here? I understand you have no transmitter.” This was not a very successful introduction, and we had a very hard time holding onto Wolf Fries after that. [Laughter] Actually there was a feeble mobile transmitter that had belonged to the Wehrmacht. And, no competition.

But the idea was no longer that we would broadcast, but that we would train a staff.

Q: A German staff?

BARDOS: A German staff. We couldn't use, almost by definition, anybody who had ever broadcast in German, because, after all, they had worked for Goebbels. If they were writers, they had written for Goebbels. If they were announcers, it was even worse.

Q: I assume the same thing was happening with the other radio companies in Stuttgart and Munich at that time, maybe even Berlin.

BARDOS: Yes, Berlin didn't exist yet. That was going to begin shortly as DIAS, as you know, “Drahtfunk.”

Q: “Drahtfunk.” Yes.

BARDOS: The wire radio service. But that happened, I think, a little later.

In any case, it was very nice to train a staff, but we had no staff to train, and we had no communications with the outside world. There was a total of two telephone lines from Bad Nauheim to the outside world, and those were shared by everybody in Bad Nauheim except 15th Army Headquarters, who had their own lines. But the two lines were shared with a magazine called Heute. By the West German news agency. By various and sundry other organizations concentrated in Bad Nauheim, one of the few places not hurt in the war. So the only way one could telephone from Bad Nauheim was by going down to the switchboard, making friends with the operator, and getting her to slip your call in outside the normal sequence, because the normal sequence would have taken a week or so.

There was nobody to train., We had one often barely conscious commentator who had no Nazi past but was an alcoholic, band who knew something about what passed for German domestic politics at that time. Bob Lochner, the news chief, was in a somewhat

better position. He inherited from Radio Luxembourg some experienced shift editors, and “trainable” news writers and announcers were somewhat easier to come by then commentators, writers, and “personalities”, on whom non-news broadcasts depended. As a result, Golo Mann and I had to do quite a bit of writing while gradually recruiting a few people whom we could employ or get to come to Bad Nauheim from time to time to record. This involved adventurous journeys to Frankfurt and other points by car. Adventurous, as the official car pool consisted of old vehicles requisitioned by the Wehrmacht early in the war and inherited by us from it. Rarely could we do twenty miles without a breakdown or a flat tire. Things did not improve until we finally moved to Frankfurt.

Q: When was that?

Spring 1945: Station Facility Found in Frankfurt

BARDOS: It must have been in early spring 1946. Our chief, Hans Gatzke (later a very distinguished professor of history at Yale, who died two years ago), learned quite by chance that the radio studio building on the Eschersheimer Landstrasse, which had been reported to have been destroyed by bombs and hence had never been checked out by information officials, was virtually intact and was being used by Army Special Services for the entertainment of the troops. The latter had entertained themselves, in part, by playing with the complex technical equipment in the studios and control rooms. Most of that was beyond repair. The rehabilitation of the building and the replacement of the equipment took several months, but the plant was operable and we could move our offices into a surviving insurance company building some hundred feet down the street by about March or April.

With the much larger pool of potential talent in the big city, however destroyed, we could make more rapid progress in putting together a team. We still had to improvise, but there were all kinds of innovations, like the first post-war political radio cabaret, a “March of Time” style documentary treatment of the weeks news, Dolf Sternberger's powerful essays on democracy and tyranny, weekly thoughtful foreign affairs commentaries, and the

beginnings of Germany's first school broadcasting program. Most important, we got a man of real stature, Eberhard Beckmann, to accept the position of “Intendant”, permitting him in the next decade or more not only to build the “Hessischen Rundfunk” into a first-class broadcast organization but also to play a major role in the evolution of West German radio and television overall.

Q: Did you stay in Frankfurt very long?

BARDOS: No. In the summer of '46 I became, for perhaps two months, the acting chief of Radio Frankfurt, which by that time was an organization with some 500 employees, including our own symphony orchestra. While all seemed to be going quite well, I was aware of the fact that I was not really ready for, or at any rate, in no way entitled to, this kind of responsibility. It was all brought home to me one day in connection with the first inter-zonal meeting of officials of West German radio stations.

Q: How was that?

BARDOS: We had invited the German administrative chiefs of all the stations in the Western occupation zones to discuss and concert our approach to such mundane problems as the payment of authors' rights, relations with the German post office (which collected and held our listeners' taxes), and more of the kind. Intendant Beckmann was organizing this somewhat historic meeting. The night before it began, he came to my office to say that he realized the matters on the agenda were for the Germans to discuss and worry about, but that the occupation was a reality. Some of the participants would be uneasy not to see the occupation authority bless the proceedings. Something like that was his reasoning. “So it would be appropriate,” he said, “for the occupying power to be represented at the opening of the session in my office. Would you mind coming in?” I put on my best uniform and found myself in this group of middle-aged, even some elderly, visibly distinguished ladies and gentlemen, some of the gentlemen with very impressive beards.

I said a few words of welcome and stayed with them for a little while. They listened with intense attention to whatever I may have said out of the wisdom of my 25 years. Then I wished them a good meeting and left them.

Bardos Feels He is Underqualified for the Large Operation Radio Frankfurt had Become.Returns to US Hired to go to Radio Austria, 1951.

I immediately went to the restroom and looked in the mirror, and made a terrible face at myself and said, “If I stay here much longer, I will begin to take myself seriously. So I'd better go back to school.”

Q: That was the end of your first radio career?

BARDOS: Yes.

Q: Let's go forward, because one of the interesting things you did, once you joined the Foreign Service and USIA, you came back to radio via the Voice of America.

BARDOS: Not really.

Q: Not really?

BARDOS: No. I was hired in Washington for Austria.

Q: Oh, yes.

BARDOS: The civilian Army operations were taken over by the State Department, and they needed people to take care of information activities. There was a very large USIS post there with about 45 officers. Maybe I should say something other than just about radio, because it was an incredibly pervasive USIS operation, such as there never will be again, I hope.

Q: When was that?

BARDOS: This was in 1951.

Q: In Vienna?

BARDOS: In Vienna. The turnover by the Army to State was, I guess, in 1950, starting in 1950.

Q: You were hired directly?

Vienna Information Program Included Many Facets Other than Radio, Radio Austria Elements then Known as Rot-Weiss-Rot, (Red-White-Red)

BARDOS: I was hired to be radio program officer in Vienna. So we had there this radio network, Vienna, Salzburg, and Linz, and this was by far the most listened-to radio in Austria.

Q: Called?

BARDOS: Called Rot-Weiss-Rot, “Red-White-Red,” which always bothered us because we were flying the Austrian national colors as an American-operated station. It was a little bit embarrassing at times. But that's what the Army had done, and there was no way we could change it at that point.

We had the country's largest newspaper, called Wienerkurier, which still exists under Austrian management, named Kurier, simply. It is a fairly direct successor. We had every kind of operation imaginable. I don't think that most people are aware of the degree to which we were really running the information machinery in Austria. Whether one considers this a good or bad thing, it was, I think, enormously effective. For instance, in all the industrial enterprises in Austria, which is a heavily trade unionized country, there was a trade union picture newspaper, poster newspaper, photographs with captions. Even in all

the factories that were under Soviet management, they had to have these newspapers on their walls. I don't know whether the Soviets knew, but they may very well have known that these newspapers under the Austrian Trade Union Federation label were put out by USIS, with the unions' agreement, of course.

Once I looked into it after the fact, because I was trying to do something similar in another country: we had footlockers with book collections circulating around the country, and I asked for a report on how this worked because I hadn't had anything directly to do with it in Austria. I found out that there were at one point—I am pretty sure I am right on the number—6,000 of these circulating.

Q: Footlockers?

BARDOS: Footlockers. Each had about 100 books, would spend two weeks in a given location—village school, restaurant, union hall, whatever. People could read the books they were interested in out of the collection.

Q: There were no libraries then in Austria.

BARDOS: There were no libraries, except USIS libraries.

Q: Yes.

BARDOS: So we had a pervasive influence on what happened. When I arrived in Vienna, it was explained to me, more or less, that this was a very popular radio station, but it had a very bad reputation for cultural integrity.

My predecessor, who was, incidentally, a very good man in his own way, was formed by American commercial radio and did something for which I was very grateful, but which was not calculated to endear him to Austrians: namely, he introduced the exact timing of programs. This was not new for Europe, but certainly for Austria, where programs usually ran as long as they ran, and then there was, in the old Austrian radio, the sound

of an alarm clock ticking, until the next program, which might have started five minutes or fifteen or half an hour later. Stu Green was this officer's name. As a good American commercial radio man, he found the alarm clock appropriately horrible, and trained people to plan their programs in advance to eliminate these pauses. In the process of training, he sometimes cut off the last ten measures of a symphony or the last three speeches of a play when somebody had made a mistake in timing. All this did not contribute to the cultural reputation of the station.

Q: Typically American, they say, right? [Laughter]

BARDOS: Yes, of course. So I had an easier time in that I was in the position to be a little more flexible on these things. [Laughter] At the same time, the necessary and good system of timing had been introduced.

So I was instructed to improve the reputation of the station, but not to lose its popularity, of course, and I was instructed to stay out of Austrian politics. I immediately asked, “Is that possible, if we broadcast news 14 times a day, every hour on the hour? Can we stay out of Austrian politics?”

“You have to. Those are your instructions.”

Q: We are still in 1951?

BARDOS: Yes, 1951 to '55, I guess. It didn't change that much, really. I violated, I am afraid, the second of these instructions on a regular basis, because you obviously were considered as playing politics, whatever you did.

There was a coalition government in Austria. There were altogether four parties. The two big ones, that mattered, the People's Party, which was a Christian Socialist party, and the Social Democrats, who were called Socialists, were in coalition. But it was not a very heartfelt coalition; it was tense, sometimes hostile. Every time we reported

something about one party that may have been useful and favorable to that party, the others would complain and demand equal time. They would go to the Ambassador—High Commissioner—to complain. The Socialists felt we should include the mass, which we broadcast every Sunday morning, as one of the party broadcasts of the People's Party. Obviously, the trade union broadcasts were considered by the latter as being Socialist broadcasts.

So, much of the thankless task of Americans working in Rot-Weiss-Rot was to somehow keep our heads down in some of these cross-fires in which we were constantly caught.

Q: Just to put this into a larger context, your radio work with Rot-Weiss-Rot was part of the USIS operation, right?

BARDOS: Yes.

Q: Who was the PAO at that time?

BARDOS: When I first went there, it was Charlie Moffly, who was a State Department Foreign Service Officer, a very good PAO. Then he was followed by the information officer, who was my boss when I went there and became public affairs officer, William Harlan Hale. Then it was, for a while, the Marshall Plan information man, who inherited the job when Bill Hale left under some implied pressure from the [Joseph] McCarthy Committee, though I do not think that he was charged with anything. The Marshall Plan man was Daniel Madden. Then it was Hank Arnold, and, finally, Jack Fleisher. I left in that period.

Q: Was Walter Roberts there?

BARDOS: No, he was never stationed in Austria, though he had, in various capacities in Washington, much to do with the program, and often went to Austria on TDY assignments.

Q: I see. But Gerry Gert was stationed there?

BARDOS: Gerry Gert came to Vienna to fill in for me when I came on home leave, after almost three years. He came from Berlin to replace me. Since everybody understandably liked him, nobody wanted to let him go, so the job was split, and that made sense. Since our competition hated me personally, as well as institutionally, because we were beating them all the time, Gerry was put in charge of being radio officer to the “enemy.”

Q: The Soviets?

BARDOS: Well, not really the Soviets, but Austrian Radio, the station controlled by them. I became program officer again.

Q: The Austrian Radio was controlled by the Soviets?

BARDOS: The old Austrian Radio. This was one of our constant problems there, but it made the job more interesting, actually. The old Austrian Radio, which was one of the very venerable radio organizations formed in the 1930s, which gave the United States (CBS) its best radio engineer—inventor of long-playing records and various other things—remained. It had become part of the “Reichsrundfunk” under the Germans and then it became the Austrian Radio, run by two public administrators. But the Soviets were in the building because the building was in the Soviet sector of Vienna. They didn't run the station. We ran Rot-Weiss-Rot. They didn't run the RAVAG, as it was popularly called.

Q: What was it called?

BARDOS: That was the old pre-war name of it, Radio—I forget now what it abbreviated.

Q: RAVAG?

BARDOS: Yes. Anyway, the Soviets insisted on certain hours of air time for programming which they prepared. Their programs were called “Russische Stunde,” Russian Hour. That was helpful to us, because it contributed to the popularity of our station, because the

“Russische Stunde” turned everybody off. The Soviets also insisted on certain standards in the Austrian Radio news, and in emergencies, they could take over the whole station. They did that in October 1950 when the tiny Communist Party of Austria called a general strike. [This strike is also mentioned in the Interview of Hans Cohrssen in this Oral History Series.] The idea was that the strike would paralyze at least Vienna and the Soviet zone of Austria, and the Russians would then have an excuse to intervene. Immediately, the Austrian Radio started broadcasting that the strike was a success and that everybody was respecting it, which, of course, was an almost certain way of making it a success. At that point—this was before I ever got there—Rot-Weiss-Rot turned itself over to the Austrian Government, and there was a Cabinet member in the station at all times, broadcasting constantly, “The strike is not being observed by anybody, only a few communists. Go to work. Function normally. Forget about it.” So that the strike was broken very rapidly.

Q: When was this?

BARDOS: This was in October 1950, I think. There is a letter from then Chancellor Figl to the radio station, thanking them for their role in breaking the strike.

The Soviets also insisted, for instance, that news from the Soviet zone be broadcast in the “official” version, and this drove Austrians up the wall. A typical news story might have been, “A person in the uniform of an officer of one of the occupying forces last night in such and such village, shot an Austrian gendarme. Investigation proceeds.” And Austrians found it outright refreshing to hear, over our station, “A Soviet officer, drunk, shot an Austrian gendarme in such and such village,” which was the truth and everybody knew to be the truth.

Q: There was very little competition in that sense.

BARDOS: In that sense, there was little competition. Otherwise, Austrian Radio had much more money, it had a much larger staff. It was a much better equipped station in a vast

radio building. We broadcast from a large middle-class Vienna apartment. But the content was on our side.

Q: I would imagine that a number of the people, the Americans who worked in Rot-Weiss-Rot, would somehow end up or be seconded after a while by the Voice of America in New York.

BARDOS: Yes. I was supposed to be transferred to the Voice of America directly. Well, I was supposed to be transferred to various places. In the end it was something totally different.

1955: Branch PAO in Casablanca, Morocco, Then —

Q: So for sequence purposes, you went from Vienna to where?

BARDOS: To Morocco. I was branch public affairs officer in Casablanca, a change from Rot-Weiss-Rot.

Q: Yes, but probably very interesting.

BARDOS: I loved it.

1959: To VOA in Washington as Head of French Service

Q: Then from there you came to New York?

BARDOS: No, to Washington.

Q: Washington by that time. The Voice of America had moved to Washington.

BARDOS: Yes, and I ended up as Chief of the French Service.

Q: When was that?

BARDOS: That was in 1955. No, I'm sorry. I left out four years. That was in early 1959, January 1959.

Q: When you became head of the French Service of the Voice of America.

1960: Bardos Suggests Switching Beaming of French Broadcasts from Eastern Europe to Africa: VOA Establishes African Division Headed by Bardos.

BARDOS: That's right. That was very much like the present-day placement services. Most of its broadcasts were for placement over French or peripheral French radio stations. I did that for about a year. By that time, we started broadcasting in French to Africa. We had been broadcasting in French to Eastern Europe, which nobody could explain the reason for, and so when I suggested to Barry Zorthian, at the time—

Q: Barry Zorthian was the program manager.

BARDOS: That's right. That really there were many more people listening to French language radio in other places than Eastern Europe, for instance, Africa, he immediately got the message and we introduced broadcasts to Africa and dropped the ones to Eastern Europe.

Q: Was this in 1960?

BARDOS: Yes, I suppose. Maybe late '59, I am not quite sure now. Then he asked me whether I wanted to start an African Division for the Voice, and I said, “I unfortunately know very little about Africa. I only know Morocco, which is hardly typically African.”

Pragmatic as he is, he said, “Look. I haven't got anyone who even knows Morocco. If you do this and Rooney asks me (Rooney being the formidable congressman who chaired our subcommittee in the House), 'Who is this man who runs this? Has he ever seen Africa?' I can say, 'Oh, yes, Mr. chairman, he spent almost four years there.'”

I said, “Well, if that's enough and if you promise me to let me go to Africa very shortly for a very extensive trip, then I'll do it.” So it was, and we started an African Division.

Q: With English and French, right?

BARDOS: English and French, over which, actually, the Division did not have control, funnily enough. The French service remained under the European division, and the English broadcasts were done by Worldwide English. So we needed to make our influence felt without power, but it worked.

Q: As a matter of fact, VOA French to Africa became a very popular—

BARDOS: Oh, it was enormously successful. I experienced that later in Africa myself.

Q: Did Henry Dunlap replace you as the Chief of the African Division? Jack Logan was—

BARDOS: Jack Logan was the deputy, my deputy, and remained deputy. But at that time, you had to be a Foreign Service officer to be a division chief.

Q: Yes.

BARDOS: I think that's why Jack could never be division chief. Maybe he did in the end, but I mean, not for years after. I know Henry was Chief of the African Division after me, but I don't remember whether it was in direct sequence. It wasn't immediately. There was nobody for a while.

Q: Anything of interest that you might want to say about the Voice of America and your service in it?

African Programming Immensely Successful

BARDOS: The African business was highly exciting. Anytime you start something new, it is exciting. In my time, the transmitting facilities in Liberia were just coming on. In fact, I'm not sure that they were on before I left. So some of the possibilities really became greater later. But we did some very exciting things there. For instance, we arranged to place, on a weekly or more frequent basis, programs on radio stations in Africa, which ranged far and wide. On the Ivory Coast, the head of the radio thought highly of their ambassador in Washington, so we broadcast a letter from their ambassador every week over the Abidjan radio station, which was useful to the United States at that time, because he spoke about the United States, and he was favorable to us. For other places we made up programs on order.

I don't think we ever quite exploited the possibilities. I was not persuasive enough, I guess, to get some things done, or maybe I wasn't there long enough. Because we had the possibility of becoming a unifying bridge for Africa, culturally speaking. I felt strongly that we should get deeply into African literature. To this day, French-speaking Africans barely know Nigerian, Ghanaian, or other Anglophone writers, and nobody in English-speaking Africa knows any of the Francophobe ones. We could have done something about that at that time, and I think it would have been a genuine service, and it would have identified the Voice of America with something very dear to the hearts of influential people all over Africa.

But there tended to be a feeling, as so often in the history of our Agency, that you had to have very demonstrable benefits before you did something, very demonstrable parochial benefits for not even the United States, but for the present policy of a given administration. So if we were onto population control, well, then your broadcasts should be about population control. If they were pushing economic development, then everything you do should be on economic development. This kind of parochial thinking, which I think was very often a brake on the potential effectiveness of USIS programs, not only in radio.

Q: At that time, we were not broadcasting in any of the African languages?

BARDOS: We began Swahili while I was there. I spoke to Julius Nyerere personally on that African trip I took about getting somebody from Radio (at that time) Tanganyika seconded to the Voice of America. He was enthusiastic about the idea and sent us a fellow named—I've forgotten his name now temporarily. He was our first Swahili broadcaster.

One met interesting people in that job. I once interviewed Patrice Lumumba for the Congo (now Zaire) Radio when he was visiting Washington. It was a memorable occasion.

Q: An interesting period at that particular time, also in the Voice, because the Voice was, first of all, expanding to other areas.

BARDOS: Henry Loomis was very interested in Africa.

Q: Henry Loomis, at that time, was Director of the Voice of America.

BARDOS: Yes, and he was very interested in Africa.

Q: Let's take a brief break and then continue in a minute. I am going to turnover the tape now and start on side two.

Interview Skips Bardos Assignments in Vietnam, Belgium, and Germany to Cover His Three-Year Tour in Turkey: 1983-86

Q: We are going to skip about 25 years, or 20-odd years, in your Foreign Service career, where you spent time in Vietnam, in Austria, in Belgium, in Germany, and go on to your service in Ankara, where you went, I believe in 1983, as public affairs counselor. I think you were specifically requested by your ambassador, and so you might as well start with the reference to your coming to Turkey and this period of three years in Turkey.

This was actually your final period in the Foreign Service. I think maybe you have some observations there. Let's start with your going to Turkey.

BARDOS: My acquaintance with Turkey was nil. It was one of the last—certainly the part of Europe that I would have least thought of going to. What I knew about the Turks was from Hungarian history, and it was not totally favorable. But it so happened, when I was finishing my tour at the Fletcher School, that I mentioned in a letter to the ambassador there, Robert Strausz-Hup#, whom I worked for in Belgium many years previously, and without the slightest purpose, that I really didn't know yet what I would be doing next. Shortly, the telephone rang and he said, “You must come to Turkey as my public affairs officer.”

I said, “Well, that doesn't make any sense. I don't know anything about your part of the world. You can get somebody who knows something about it. You are doing yourself an injustice by bringing in an amateur.”

He said, “No, the specialists are no good.” He said, “They think they know everything about the country, and that hampers their seeing things as they are. You will learn fast. Besides, the Magyars and the Turks have all kinds of connections and that's all to the good. You'll learn Turkish very fast.”

And he kept at it, until, in the third or fourth phone conversation, I finally said, “Well, okay. If the Agency goes along with it, so be it.” He made sure that the Agency went along with it, and I went to Turkey.

Q: In 1983?

BARDOS: In 1983. Our personnel cycles worked in amazingly well with Turkish history. Sam Courtney was PAO there in the late 1970's, in the years of chaos, when there wasn't very much anybody, including USIS, could do there. When the military took over, he was replaced by Marshall Berg, who started rebuilding the program and did a very beautiful job

of it. When the end of the military period was coming on, I replaced Marshall for a period of not entirely easy normalization, in which we were often perceived as being much too friendly to the military. But at the same time, we had to try to keep reminding the Turks of human rights, which they were a little prone to forget in that period. So it was an interesting historic moment when I arrived there.

It was interesting in many other ways, as well, and this will explain why a good deal of energy there had to go into what probably is considered the cultural area. We were living in Turkey—I guess we still are living in Turkey—on the cultural capital that was produced during the Marshall Plan, when a whole generation of Turkish intellectuals and leaders were trained in American universities financed from AID funds. I went there to find an already enlarged, but still ridiculously small, Fulbright program, replacing waves—I think in the top year of AID programming, there were 600 people annually in American universities from Turkey—by maybe 40 under the Fulbright program, or 50 a year.

Certainly one of the most important things we could have done in Turkey at that time, but didn't do—we tried—was to introduce a fairly massive program of university education in this county.

Q: Would that have been undergraduate university education?

BARDOS: Yes. At that time, Senator Mathias was beginning to be interested in going back into undergraduate education on a massive basis in some countries, and I was in touch with his staff. I guess if he had run for reelection, something might have happened, but in the end, the plan petered out.

Q: So you were still primarily in graduate education with the Fulbright?

Rehabilitating and Revitalizing the Binational Center (the Turkish-American Association)

BARDOS: Yes, entirely. No undergraduate Fulbright program. Another problem we had was that a lot of institutions that we had reason to be interested in had become totally chaotic, one of them a very large Turkish-American Association, a binational center, which had a huge building in totally devastated state.

Q: In Ankara?

BARDOS: In Ankara. Staff at loggerheads with each other, a board of directors that was in danger of being taken over by very dubious, politically questionable, individuals for their own aggrandizement. So we had to run a Tammany Hall type operation to get a new board. We did that successfully. We organized every member we could get hands at. I mean, American members. We made everybody join, first of all. The ambassador helped us. At every staff meeting, he announced that this was the last chance to join the Turkish-American Association. [Laughter] Once we had joined them, we got proxies from all of them for the annual meeting, and we voted in a first-rate board. That's how it started. It ended up with my going around to all the big companies, American and Turkish, and collecting something like $80,000 for the refurbishing of the theater for the Turkish-American Association.

So all of this had to be done because we were seriously considering—Marshall Berg was and I was—trying to close down the binational center, but it was obvious to us that we couldn't do that. It would live on, it would be associated with the United States forever and ever, and it would be an ever greater embarrassment. So there was really no alternative to making it something that we could live with. This, on the whole, succeeded.

But the politically interesting part was the inevitable need, on the one hand, to be faithful to our human rights concerns; on the other, maintaining good relations with one of our most important allies. One of our most important allies, partly because of the size of its armed forces; it's the second largest army in NATO after ours.

Q: After the Germans?

BARDOS: No.

Q: They are bigger than the Germans in their Army?

BARDOS: Much bigger.

Q: I didn't realize that.

BARDOS: Not as well equipped, but much bigger. And also because of their location. As my ambassador used to say, “You can't argue with geography. Turkey controls the Dardanelles and the Bosporus.” So we could not shrug our shoulders and let the Turks go whichever way they would. On the other hand, we could not accept unacceptable human rights standards.

Ambassador Strausz-Hup#'s Memorable, Sometimes Acrimonious Dinner Party for Arthur Miller and Harold Pinter

So there were some fascinating episodes in all this, for instance, when Arthur Miller and Harold Pinter, on behalf of Pen Internationals, came to look into the welfare of a Yale-educated playwright who was in jail for alleged communist activities. They were interested in human rights practices, in general. The ambassador gave a dinner for them, to which he invited some interesting Turks, including the head of the Social Democratic Party, the son of one of the founders of modern Turkey, Ismet Inonu. We also discovered that even fine writers and men of integrity, like Arthur Miller, when they tell about an event that they participated in, are subject to selective memory. So his account of that dinner party is somewhat skewed. You also find that you can take pride in a fellow American like Arthur Miller, which one could, because his behavior was exceptional, especially when contrasted with the behavior of Pinter.

Q: Oh, really?

BARDOS: Pinter was inebriated, a totally loose cannon. There was a memorable exchange in which he said something about the United States, after dinner, that the ambassador took (perhaps wrongly) to have suggested that the United States was violating human rights in Turkey. I think it was a hearing error on the part of the ambassador. The ambassador said, “Sir, you are a guest in this house,” meaning that he was not going to get into an argument. Whereupon Pinter, like an angry poodle, said, “I shan't be for long,” and rushed off to the anteroom, only to discover that somebody had to call a taxi for him. He didn't really want to just go out of the house and start looking for a taxi, so he came back and stayed till the end of the party.

Q: I would think that Ambassador Strausz-Hup# would have been a particularly well-qualified representative of the United States at that time in Turkey. He was certainly a conservative. On the other hand, he is a person who is widely respected as an intellect in this country, and I would think that this was a good assignment.

BARDOS: I think so. I think most of the Turks liked him very much. He is conservative, but not an ideologue, really, though he sometimes thinks he is. I once asked him. We were doing a series of discussions on seminal books, American books, in the library. I felt since everybody was of the opinion that conservatism had become the dominant philosophical and political movement in our country, we ought to have a book about conservatism. So I told him that since he was the house conservative, I ought to ask him which book would be appropriate. Whereupon he said, “Alexis Tocqueville.”

I said, “Well, actually, Tocqueville is the only non-American to be included, but we will take him in our next year's series. Next years the series will be on the Constitution, and I would like to reserve Tocqueville for that.”

He said, “Well, maybe Hayek.”

I said, “Well, Hayek is not an American, and I don't want to go that far afield. What do you think about Buckley's God and Man at Yale?”

I will not quote him on that, but he really didn't seem terribly impressed by the idea. Then I asked him about Kirk's The Conservative Mind, and he said, “Well, frankly, I haven't read these books.”

“But you are supposed to be one of these people, after all.”

He said, “Look. I am a conservative, but I am a European conservative.” [Laughter]

So he was not an ideologue, and he could handle all kinds of people. In fact, Miller, in his account of the evening, found him to be fairly impressive. Pinter didn't.

Q: But Miller did?

BARDOS: Yes. There was a rightist newspaperwoman there, a conservative newspaperwoman, Nazmillicak, who sat near Pinter and said something that disagreed with Pinter's views on Turkey. Pinter gave her a passionate defense of the freedom of speech, and she said, “Look. What have you ever done for the freedom of speech? I have spent many months in jail for it. And I really don't appreciate your telling me about it.”

Bardos' Views on the Increasing Role of Cultural Programming in USIA Operations, and Type of Personnel Needed to Carry it Out

Q: Since we have arrived at a point where we're talking really about the part that our cultural representation, our cultural programs, play in the realm of public diplomacy, I know you touched on that. You wrote about this in your monograph, but it might be useful for this particular project to have your views on the role of the cultural program, cultural exchanges, educational exchanges, that they play in the whole public diplomacy universe of the United States Government.

BARDOS: I personally think that in time they will became an ever larger part of our public diplomacy.

Q: Why?

BARDOS: Information activities will become less and less necessary and perhaps less and less possible as more and more countries develop their own freer media, or maybe totally free media, and American media empires begin doing most of the things that the US government can do less well. TV Worldnet, except for the interactive part of it, doesn't have very much meaning when you can watch CNN in real time in Budapest or in Ankara, which I did last fall. So if USIA is to survive as a viable organization, it will have to emphasize what nobody else can really take on, and that is primarily the cultural side of public diplomacy. That, somehow, remains valid, even in places where you would think that it can be replaced.

For instance, in visiting Turkey last fall, we have superb libraries and librarians.

Q: "We" meaning USIS.

BARDOS: USIS. But the universities there are now attached to all the information networks imaginable in the United States and elsewhere, so they can get information from just about anywhere, just about any time. The central university library subscribes to many hundreds of US journals. Yet, the reliance of academic people, as well as government people, as well as political people, on the USIS library has not diminished. Maybe it is only USIS staff people, but the fact is we have the tradition of having trained such people and of being able to provide services, which technology apparently cannot—at least not yet—take over from us.

I've always felt that there was a tendency in USIA to consider information activities, and successes in information activities, more saleable to Congress and the American public

and, therefore, more important and better justifiable than cultural ones, and that this was very often a mistake in given places at given times.

I do not feel that in Vietnam we accomplished less. Unfortunately, we didn't accomplish enough by any means, but I didn't feel that we accomplished less in the cultural field than we did in the information field. That is, we talked to people, we gave people faith in us, which is probably the most important thing we could have done at that time.

So I do feel that the Agency will have to take another look at the balance of its activities. Obviously there will be information activities and, above all, information contacts, which will remain terribly important in most, if not all, countries. There, too, we will have to take a very careful look at the kind of officers we employ in the information field. There was room for all kinds until now, until recently. But there will really only be room for those who can speak on equal terms about ideas and trends with the best editors abroad, because that will be the principal thing we will be able to do there.

Q: In other words, they have to be intellectually as well qualified as they are professionally in whatever specialty they have, whether it is radio, television, or print medium.

BARDOS: That's right.

Q: How do you envisage this working itself out in the future for USIA? Do you think we should require that people come to us better trained before we hire them, or should we involve ourselves—"we" meaning USIA—in training these people to do these jobs in a particular society, in a particular country?

BARDOS: Well, it will have to be both, I suppose, but certainly I'm not suggesting that we should discard any officers the Agency now has who may not be cut from the cloth that we now think is important. But I think it's very important that we get people with very, very fine educational background, preferably some professional experience and then we have to

train them for the countries that they go to, indeed. And we have to train them not only in the superficialities of that country, but a little bit in its history and its background.

Q: And the psychology.

BARDOS: And psychology, that sort of thing.

Q: In the past, we have had at some posts cultural affairs officers, cultural attach#s, who came from universities or other places and we called them Super-CAOs because we felt that their contribution substantively could be substantial, better and more than a career officer. What are your views on that?

BARDOS: It's very difficult to be against that. It depends on which examples you are thinking of. We have had some superb Super-CAOs, and I only need to mention Wayne Wilcox, in London, who died such a tragic death in an airplane crash.

Q: Robin Winks, too.

BARDOS: Robin Winks. Then there are others who shall be nameless, but who were essentially failures in many aspects of these jobs. But I was in charge of recruiting these for a short time in my dim past, when I was cultural affairs advisor to the Agency. I remember telephoning Burnett Anderson, who was PAO in Paris, and asking, “Are you interested in a Super-CAO for Paris?” It was obviously one of the places where you'd want one.

He said, “Yes, I would like one very much, but only if you can give me two extra slots with him.”

I said, “What do you mean?”

So he said, “I will need somebody who runs the shop. That's one slot. Such a man doesn't. Then I need another one who programs him. If you can come up with those two slots, I

would love to have a super-CAO." And I couldn't really argue with him about that. It wasn't true of Wilcox, who was very capable of taking care of himself, but for perhaps most of them, actually, it was.

So it's a luxury. I think it is nice to have, but it may not always work. But I think that most of the CAOs, frankly, should have the intellectual, perhaps not academically recognized, intellectual level of a Super-CAO.

Q: In other words, they should come to us as intellectually trained people to do the kind of work we require them to do?

BARDOS: Or at least having the beginnings of such training.

Q: Any final thoughts?

BARDOS: These 35 years I spent with the Agency went very fast, and it would not be true to say that I enjoyed every minute of them, but I enjoyed a very large part. I wouldn't have wanted to have had a different career.

Q: Thank you very much, Arthur.

BARDOS: Thank you.

End of interview